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Report: Seven Top Texas Officials Collected \$6.3 Million Tied to Companies Accused of Blackout Profiteering in 2021 Storm

Donors tied to 36 companies that private lawsuits allege manipulated natural gas markets to improperly profit from 2021's deadly Winter Storm Uri contributed \$6.3 million to seven top Texas officials who have failed to hold those companies accountable, a [new study by Texans for Public Justice and Public Citizen's Texas Office](#) finds.

As a recent *Houston Chronicle* series explained,¹ top officials in Oklahoma and Kansas are investigating and litigating Uri price-gouging allegations in their states. But top Texas officials have left it to private plaintiffs to seek civil damages in this state. Leading lawsuits by [CPS Energy](#) and [CirclesX Recovery, LLC](#) allege that units of 67 companies withheld gas to spike prices. This triggered blackouts that caused an estimated [246 deaths](#) and stuck Texas consumers with billions of dollars in debts that will take decades to pay off, CirclesX claims. The defendant companies deny wrongdoing.

Since 2017, executives and PACs tied to 36 of those defendant energy-trading companies contributed \$6.3 million to seven top Texas officials who failed to tackle any related abuses, the new report finds. "Nobody's wallet is safe when the police take a cut of the alleged pickpocket plunder," said Texans for Public Justice Research Director Andrew Wheat.

Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick initially clamored to claw back windfall profits in the storm's wake but failed to overcome the intransigence of Governor Abbott and Speaker Dade Phelan. Railroad Commissioner Christi Craddick even [praised](#) the gas industry's handling of the crisis, which colleague Wayne Christian falsely blamed on renewable energy. Attorney General Paxton did file a price-gouging lawsuit. But it [targeted](#) a lone motel instead of the big boys.

"Texans are facing frequent hardships because of weather-related disasters and pollution linked to oil and gas infrastructure," said Commission Shift Executive Director Virginia Palacios. "We need state oversight officials to have the ability to take a sober look at the data and relevant facts so that we can prevent more disasters and pollution in the future. The structure of campaign finance in Texas is allowing the oil and gas industry to pump millions into elected officials' campaigns, clouding their judgement and making life more expensive and difficult for ordinary Texans."

"Texas is sick with oil money," said Public Citizen Texas Office Director Adrian Shelley. "There's no other explanation for lawmakers downplaying the role of fossil fuels in the Winter Storm Uri disaster while cashing six- and seven-figure checks from the industry. Hundreds died while state leaders lined their own pockets. Why won't Texas invest in energy efficiency? Why won't the Public Utility Commission acknowledge the roles of wind and solar in keeping the lights on? Texas is being held back by fossil fuel corporations, and all Texans are paying the price."

Contributions Tied to Alleged Uri-Storm Profiteers (Jan. 2017 to August 2023)

Top State Official	Amount
Greg Abbott (R)	\$4,258,597
Dan Patrick (R)	\$799,337
Christi Craddick (R)	\$380,174
Dade Phelan (R)	\$317,253
Jim Wright (R)	\$210,202
Wayne Christian (R)	\$202,801
Ken Paxton (R)	\$161,702
TOTAL	\$6,330,066

Texas Ethics Commission, Texans for Public Justice.

¹ [“Deadly Texas blackouts during 2021 freeze were caused by greed, not the cold, lawsuits allege,”](#) August 9, 2023. [“Texas pipeline operators triggered deadly 2021 blackouts while chasing profits, lawsuit alleges,”](#) August 11, 2023. [“Rival companies, state AGs accuse Texas pipeline operators of fraud,”](#) August 14, 2023. [“Why Texas regulators refuse to investigate role pipelines played in 2021 blackouts,”](#) August 24, 2023.